

John F. Kennedy vs. the Empire

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The Shift in the Space Program

President Kennedy spoke to the UN General Assembly on Sept. 20, as the U.S. Senate was considering the test-ban treaty.

He said we had achieved a pause in the Cold War, and that we must work for a genuine *détente* between the great powers through cooperation in our mutual interest.

Two years earlier, he had proposed to Congress that the United States send men to the Moon by the end of the 1960s. In that same speech, Kennedy announced that we would “accelerate development of the Rover nuclear rocket. This gives promise of some day providing a means for even more exciting and ambitious exploration of space, perhaps beyond the Moon, perhaps to the very end of the Solar System itself.” The world was inspired and remembers John F. Kennedy most vividly, in connection with the fulfillment of the lunar landing phase of this ultimately aborted project.

Until then, American preeminence in the contest with Soviet Communism was the public rationale for the proposed leap in the space program. But by 1963, Kennedy had shifted his objective to a joint space mission with the Russians. Throughout his Presidency— after his Inaugural Address had urged, “Together let us explore the stars”—he had NASA Deputy Administrator Hugh Dryden exploring with Soviet scientists the possibilities of joint work in space.¹²

This dialogue persisted despite the Bay of Pigs invasion and crises over Berlin and missiles in Cuba.

In his Sept. 20 UN address, Kennedy had said, “I include among these possibilities [for great power cooperation] a joint expedition to the Moon. . . . Why . . . should man’s first flight to the Moon be a matter of national competition? Why should the United States and the Soviet Union . . . become involved in immense duplications of research, construction, and expenditure? Surely we should explore whether the scientists and astronauts of our two countries—indeed of all the world— cannot work together in the conquest of space, sending someday in this decade to the Moon not the representatives of a single nation, but the representatives of all of our countries.”

The prospect of U.S.-Russian collaboration, or indeed of any dramatic space objectives, had drawn the hostile fire of those politically invested in Anglo-American geopolitics.

To outflank resistance within the Executive branch, on Nov. 12, Kennedy directed NASA Administrator James Webb “to assume personally the initiative and control responsibility within the Government for the development of substantive cooperation with the Soviet Union in the field of outer space . . . as a direct outcome of my September 20 proposal . . . including cooperation in lunar landing programs. . . . [The] channel of contact . . . between NASA and the Soviet Academy of Sciences has been quite effective. . . . I would like an interim report on the progress of our planning by December 15.”¹³

Fidel Castro began putting out feelers to Kennedy in 1963, making known, in the words of William Attwood, JFK’s advisor on African affairs, that “he was unhappy about



Dr. Wernher von Braun explains to the President the Saturn Launch System for the Moon program, Nov. 16, 1963.

Cuba’s [Soviet] satellite status and was looking for a way out, . . . that he wanted an accommodation with the United States and would make substantial concessions to this end; also that a rift was developing on this issue between Castro and his chief pro-Communist associate, Che Guevara, who considered him dangerously unreliable.”¹⁴

President Kennedy deployed Attwood to pursue contacts with Castro aimed at normalizing Cuban- American relations. The dialogue proceeded through channels under the President’s personal control, including Attorney General Robert Kennedy, the liaison to Castro’s personal aide Major René Toledo, who said Castro wanted a meeting with U.S. representatives without the presence of Guevara.

On the morning of Nov. 19, Attwood was told that Kennedy wanted a report from him following upcoming meetings at the UN, preparatory to the President’s face-to-face with Castro; and that the President “would not be leaving Washington, except for a brief trip to Dallas.”¹⁵

Vietnam

As with Cuba and Congo, the Vietnam conflict was a bomb that had been planted in Kennedy’s path by the Churchill faction before he had assumed the Presidency.

Vietnam’s Sept. 2, 1945 Declaration of Independence from the French empire was modeled on the U.S. Declaration. It began with these words: “ ‘All men are created equal; they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.’ This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. . . .”

Six months after Vietnam’s Declaration, while JFK was an anti-imperial Congressional candidate, on Feb. 16, 1946, Vietnamese nationalist leader Ho Chi Minh wrote a letter to U.S. President Harry Truman, asking the U.S. to honor the late Franklin Roosevelt’s policy. Ho wanted American protection, like that given to the Philippines, under which

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Vietnam could proceed to national independence:

“. . . Our Vietnam people, as early as 1941, stood by the Allies' side and fought against the Japanese and their associates, the French colonialists. . . .

“But the French colonialists, who had betrayed in war-time both the Allies and the Vietnamese, have come back and are waging on us a murderous and pitiless war in order to reestablish their domination. . . .

“This aggression . . . is a challenge to the noble attitude shown before, during and after the war by the United States Government and People. . . .

“Our Vietnam people . . . need security and freedom, first to achieve internal prosperity and welfare, and later to bring its small contribution to world-reconstruction.

“These securities and freedoms can only be guaranteed by our independence from any colonial power, and our free cooperation with all other powers. It is with this firm conviction that we request of the United States as guardians and champions of World Justice to take a decisive step in support of our independence.

“What we ask has been graciously granted to the Philippines. Like the Philippines our goal is full independence and full cooperation with the United States. We will do our best to make this independence and cooperation profitable to the whole world.”

But the Truman Administration supported the British in restoring French rule over Indochina. Ho's movement, relying on Communist support, defeated the French and by 1954 had set up a government in North Vietnam. A U.S.-backed regime was installed in South Vietnam under President Ngo Dinh Diem with U.S. military advisors, and a new Indochina war ensued.

The incoming President Kennedy was under pressure to send U.S. combat troops and expand the war. He continued to consult ex-President Eisenhower, who counseled restraint. In the first of two celebrated meetings, Gen. Douglas MacArthur conferred April 20, 1961 with former PT-boat captain Kennedy in the White House. The discussion was later summarized by Ted Sorensen: “MacArthur. . . warned him against the commitment of American foot soldiers on the Asian mainland, and the President never forgot his advice.”¹⁶

Kennedy had previously negotiated an agreement with the Russians on the neutrality of Laos, which borders Vietnam.

By 1963, he had learned through the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis that avoiding betrayal and disaster depended on his personal control of the Administration's actions. Kennedy relied on South Vietnam President Diem to keep the U.S. role in the conflict there limited to U.S. advisors, and planned to gradually withdraw the limited American military presence.

With American industrial, scientific and military power at its height, Kennedy aimed for an eventual Vietnam settlement under the umbrella of the détente he was building with the Soviets.

Kennedy's betrayal by Averell Harriman, then Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, led to the escalation of the war in Vietnam after Kennedy's murder. Under confused circumstances engineered by Harriman and his followers within the government, Harriman initiated a message approving Diem's overthrow. President Diem was assassinated Nov. 2, 1963, just 20 days before Kennedy himself was killed.



JFK and Attorney General Robert Kennedy, March 28, 1963. Bobby's support aided his brother's increasingly successful leadership and personal control over the Presidency.

Kennedy for Posterity

John F. Kennedy's Presidency announced to mankind that the 1960s and the life of the rising generation should be the era of peaceful cooperation to explore the stars, to advance man's scientific powers, to end imperial resource-grabs and reverse colonial poverty.

The British Crown disagreed.

Two months after Kennedy's inauguration, a royal family project issued a document aimed at organizing the ultra-rich and world opinion to prevent precisely this American objective.

Their “Morges Manifesto” of April 29, 1961, proposed to deal with the “crisis” and “emergency” in the Congo and throughout Africa, and the “vast numbers” who “are losing their lives, or their homes, in an orgy of thoughtless and needless destruction.”

But the “crisis,” in the British view, was that “advancing civilization” was bringing farms and dams to what they viewed as useless darkskinned people. The dying “vast numbers” they were concerned about were animal wildlife—not impoverished humans.

This was the founding document of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), whose founders were Prince Philip, consort of Queen Elizabeth II, and Prince Bernhard, husband of Netherlands' Queen Juliana, and a former intelligence officer for Hitler's SS.¹⁷

The royals' Manifesto stated that “a supporting Club of leading citizens of many countries, . . . an active group of men of affairs,” was to finance “an international Trust.” A “sort of ‘war room’ at the international headquarters” was to coordinate “all the main international bodies concerned in this world campaign . . . to raise massive support for the cause” of the royals' new, Green movement, or “environmentalism.”

The indicated sponsoring group, later called the “1001 Club,” was comprised of members of the financier families in the City of London, billionaire owners of natural resources in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, and leading strategists of imperial covert action.

President Kennedy showed his dedication to the advancement of man's powers over nature in his commitment to nuclear energy, based on the breeder

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reactor, fuel reprocessing, and the use of thorium, as well as uranium. Kennedy announced on Sept. 26, 1963, at the Hanford Nuclear station, that “by the end of this century . . . half of all electric energy generated in the United States will come from nuclear sources.” After 2000, virtually all new electric power installations would be nuclear.¹⁸

As the use of nuclear power was being accelerated, Kennedy said at Hanford, “We must maintain an aggressive program to use our hydro resources to the fullest. Every drop of water which goes to the ocean without being used for power or used to grow, or being made available on the widest possible basis is a waste. . . .” He supported the North American Water and Power Alliance (NAWAPA) program to divert rivers from Arctic and North Pacific flow for the use of all North America.¹⁹

President Kennedy brought about the construction of a nuclear power research reactor in Vietnam. U.S. funding was announced on Aug. 9, 1963; the reactor was dedicated by President Diem on Oct. 28, five days before he was murdered.

Kennedy also financed a nuclear research reactor for his ally President Sukarno of Indonesia, and the U.S. sent scientists to help with the experiments. Indonesia set off its first sustained nuclear chain reaction on Oct. 17, 1964, before post-Kennedy intrigues led to Sukarno’s overthrow.

The Kennedy space program aimed for manned landings on Mars by the 1980s. Nuclear rockets essential for this journey were being developed during Kennedy’s administration at the Rover project test site in Nevada.

Throughout his Presidency, Kennedy promoted with great eagerness the desalination of seawater for world development and peace. He reorganized the Atomic Energy Commission to carry out research for nuclear-powered desalination. He arranged nuclear desalination work with Russia, Mexico, Israel, Egypt, and several other Arab countries, pushing particularly for joint Arab and Israeli nuclear water projects as the basis for peace.²⁰

This had been his goal for some time. As a Senator in 1957, Kennedy proposed “a Middle Eastern Nuclear Center, similar to the Asian Nuclear Center already proposed, which could bring untold benefits in energy utilization to former deserts and wasteland. These projects would be developed and administered under the auspices and control of the nations in the region. . . . [T]he benefits . . . would be mutual.”²¹

During the showdown with Governor Wallace over Federal intervention for civil rights, Kennedy spoke—with Wallace present—at the 30th anniversary celebration for the Tennessee Valley Authority at Muscle Shoals, Ala. The TVA had long been racially integrated, and the workers, white and black, cheered for their President.

Kennedy detailed the tremendous economic growth of the region, of its private industry and income, under this Federal program. He cited the thousands of past and future world leaders who visit the TVA installations, “from nations whose poverty threatens to exceed their hopes . . . and they leave here feeling that they, too, can solve their problems in a system of freedom.”

Without mentioning Wallace, Kennedy said, “From time to time statements are made labeling the Federal Government an outsider, an intruder, an adversary. . . . Without the National Government, the people of the United States, working together, there would be no protection of the family farmer. . . . [H]e never would



Sen. John F. Kennedy, Oak Ridge Director Dr. Alvin Weinberg, Tennessee Senator Al Gore, Sr., and Jacqueline Kennedy, at the Oak Ridge Graphite Nuclear Reactor, Feb. 2, 1959.

have been able to electrify his farm, to insure his crop, to support its price, and to stay ahead of the bugs, the boll weevils, and the mortgage bankers. . . . [T]here would be no Hill-Burton hospitals, which have helped develop the best hospital system in the world today. . . . Only a great national effort . . . can explore the mysteries of space . . . and mobilize the human, natural, and material resources of our lands.”

JFK closed by citing the favorite phrase of Sen. George Norris, TVA’s co-founder with Franklin Roosevelt: “. . . his reference, and his dedication, to ‘generations yet unborn.’ The first of those generations is now enjoying the fruits of his labor, as will others for decades to come. So let us all . . . resolve that we, too, in our time, 30 years later, will, ourselves, build a better Nation for ‘generations yet unborn.’ ”

The End

Footnotes:

12. History will rightly note that the anti-Newtonian scientific expertise of Dryden (airflow, turbulence, problems of the boundary layer) and his chief Soviet counterpart Leonid Sedov (continuum mechanics, non-steady motion of a wing, discontinuous velocity fields, turbulent flows, boundary conditions) are implicitly anti-imperial.

13. NSAM 271

14. William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp. 142-144.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Op. cit.*, Sorensen, p. 641.

17. “Manifesto” author Julian Huxley, Britain’s senior African strategist, and president of the British Eugenics Society, had written, in *Man in the Modern World* (1947), “The lowest strata are reproducing relatively too fast. Therefore . . . they must not have too easy access to relief or hospital treatment lest the removal of the last check on natural selection should make it too easy for children to be produced or to survive; long unemployment should be a ground for sterilisation.”

18. Atomic Energy Commission, “Civilian Nuclear Power—Report to the President”; requested by Kennedy March 17, 1962; issued Nov. 20, 1962.

19. This program is urgently needed today to provide millions of jobs, and triple the water table of the American West, and Mexico (see www.larouchepac.com).

20. Testimony of JFK’s nuclear advisor James T. Ramey at Senate hearings on Saline Water Conversion, May 19, 1965.

21. John F. Kennedy, *The Strategy for Peace* (New York: Popular Library, 1961), p. 151.



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